

## Command Philosophy

**"MISSION FIRST; PEOPLE ALWAYS"**

### **Operational Competence.**

- Our ability to win battles and respond to crisis hinges on individual and collective competence. Discipline, tactical/technical proficiency, professional development and teamwork are elements of this competency. We need Marines and Sailors who go beyond "talking the talk." Operational prowess can only be realized when we provide the tools, training and leadership necessary to hone skills during training.
- Operational competence is often measured when there's nobody looking over your shoulder. It builds confidence and esprit and is essential to teamwork. If you can't look back over a day's activities and identify at least one thing that increased your professional and operational competence, you've wasted a day.
- We must seek and create every opportunity to conduct integrated Aviation Ground Support and warfighting skills training. MWSG-27 is key to the expeditionary readiness of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. Our pride should be based on supporting all missions professionally and effectively.

### **Expeditionary Readiness.**

- This is one of our core competencies. It embodies our philosophy for living and fighting and is what makes us truly unique. We will be prepared to operate with only what we need, for only as long as we need it. We must stay mentally and emotionally adaptive and not be thrown off course by the unexpected. We will rely on our self-discipline, integrated training, equipment and personnel readiness, and the ability to make sacrifices to ensure we remain ready to perform with little or no advance notice.
- We must maintain our equipment in the highest readiness posture that is achievable. This is key to being prepared to fulfill all missions: On Time/On Target.
- Likewise, our personnel and family readiness are critical to our expeditionary readiness. Each leader must know their Marines and Sailors. We must ensure each person is mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially prepared for expeditionary operations at all times.

**Leadership.** This is clearly a topic that is too broad to adequately cover here. Let me just mention a few points that guide my approach to leadership.

- First and foremost, we must recognize that there are only two kinds of people in MWSG-27, leaders and those aspiring to be leaders. As a result, all must be given the opportunity to practice leadership without fear of failure. "Let leaders lead" is a great maxim. Those aspiring to be leaders must be given their reins from time to time so that they can experiment with leadership styles and practices. We will give our Marines and Sailors decision-making authority commensurate with their responsibilities. Initiative and imagination must be encouraged, recognized and rewarded.
- Everyone is accountable for themselves and those under their charge.
- We must set and enforce high standards of personal conduct; on and off the job.
- Ideas that flow from our junior Marines and Sailors are worth listening to. Innovative tactics and techniques almost always come from the most junior warriors. Make yourself accessible.
- Physical and moral courage are equally important leadership characteristics. Moral courage empowers us to speak up when "the emperor has no clothes." Physical courage inspires others to exercise their own inner strength.
- "Supervision" is not a four-letter-word. Nor does it insinuate a lack of trust or confidence - it is an important element of leadership.
- It's easy to tell a subordinate "no" - anyone can do that. Our intent is to say "yes" whenever we can and explain why when we must say "no".

### **Marines, Sailors, and Their Families.**

- These people form the foundation of our Group. Americans love their Corps and want it to succeed. This success is often driven by how well we treat each other. Taking care of Marines and Sailors is not limited to providing tangibles. The dignity and respect we pay them and their family members are a reflection of our love for them, our Corps and Country.
- Treat every Marine and Sailor as if he or she could be lost in combat tomorrow.
- We must recognize that family readiness contributes to operational readiness that is both measurable and subjective. Including family members in the society of the Corps gives us inner strength and confidence.
- Every Marine and Sailor is a recruiter and career planner. We are blessed with the ability to sustain the heritage of the Navy and Marine Corps by encouraging quality Marines and Sailors to stay on the team.

- Through education, mentoring, leadership and encouragement, we can ensure Marines, Sailors, and their families will contribute to our operational competence.

**Teamwork.** ". . . *the strength of the Pack is the Wolf and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*"

- "It's not about you or me, but us." The power of the team cannot be overstated. Individual performance is only important in that it contributes to the mission of the Aviation Combat Element or "Our Team". We willingly sacrifice for each other in combat. We need to cultivate this element of our ethos in peacetime as well.

**Safety.** Marines and Sailors are the toughest, meanest fighting machines ever to have marched to the sound of gunfire.

- If, as a matter of routine, we adjusted our behavior and actions to the situation, we would reduce the number of Marines and Sailors we lose to accidents. The majority of our Marines are on their first enlistment. They are aggressive, competitive warriors who enjoy living on the edge and pushing the envelope. It's this aggressiveness that makes opponents fear them. We must however, be able to regulate our conduct and behavior based a reasonable assessment of risk.
- How many "shipmates" must die because they weren't wearing seat belts or were too tired to drive before we get the idea? Don't get me wrong; this isn't about avoiding risks at all costs. It is about making sure that our people make sound decisions in all activities. Risk assessment skills associated with Operational Risk Management (ORM) must be taught, tested and evaluated. The safety of our people is a leadership responsibility.
- Safety is a Force Protection/Readiness issue. The loss of a single Marine or Sailor, whether the loss is permanent or temporary, degrades this Group's ability to fulfill our Warfighting mission.

**Priorities.** Some things are more important than others. Some things need to be done sooner than others. Blinding flash of the obvious but terribly important.

- It's vital that all members of the unit understand what the priorities are. When feasible, we should explain the reason for the ranking.
- Leaders establish, communicate and set timelines for priorities.

- Some important things do not need to be done quickly. At the same time, some less important things are needed ASAP. Leaders use their experience and judgment to sort this out and provide intent. When everything is a priority, nothing's a priority.
- In planning and operations, we will never enjoy the luxury of completing one task before starting another. Simultaneous operations are a characteristic expeditionary operations that will challenge us to handle multiple tasks, while shifting priorities to support success.
- Just because something is not a top priority doesn't mean that we lower our standards. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well" is a good guiding principle.

### **Fulfillment and Enrichment**

- Marines and Sailors are happy when they are physically and mentally challenged.
- They want to be held to high standards.
- They want to share experiences.
- They want to contribute.
- They want to share hardship and sacrifice.
- They enjoy demonstrating self-discipline when things get tough.
- They demand and deserve sound leadership.
- They enjoy competition.
- They are fulfilled when they are encouraged to succeed and rewarded when they do.
- Given all that we ask of our people, they are more than entitled to have some fun. It's as important to plan for fun, as it is to schedule PT or a training deployment. We must encourage those under our leadership to develop outside interests. We will allow them time to enjoy their families and the camaraderie that is such a vital part of our heritage.
- We must also encourage and accommodate our Marines and Sailors aggressively pursuing off duty education. We owe it to our Marines and Sailors and the Nation to provide the opportunity to seek self-improvement.
- Leaders are responsible for teaching their Marines and Sailors about the many activities that are available outside of work. The entire MCCS program is designed to enrich Marines through positive involvement in their community. Obstacles to good clean fun will be removed. Sometimes, having fun or a little extra time off from work to spend with family or friends should be the top priority.

*All MWSG-27 Marines and Sailors are encouraged to share their ideas. We need to know what's working and what's not. We need to know what we aren't doing that we should -- and what we are doing that we shouldn't.*

I am honored to serve YOU!

Colonel Stephen F. Kirkpatrick  
Commanding Officer  
Marine Wing Support Group 27